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Summary record of the 3rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 13 June 2018, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Rohland (Acting Vice-President) ..... (Germany)

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In the absence of Mr. Panayotov (Bulgaria), Mr Rohland (Germany), Acting Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 5: Matters related to the implementation of the Convention (*continued*)

(a) General debate (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Rodríguez Abascal** (Cuba) said that more political will was necessary to promote international cooperation, thereby improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities and increasing their social inclusion. It would be impossible to eliminate the discrimination faced by women and children with disabilities without first eliminating structural issues such as underdevelopment and social exclusion. Governments must work effectively to remove barriers preventing persons with disabilities from enjoying their right to active and full participation in decision-making processes on an equal footing with all citizens.

2. To achieve social development in Cuba, it was vital to protect and meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities. Such persons had inviolable rights and were beneficiaries of social programmes and public policies with universal coverage. However, the adverse effects of an unjust international economic order, compounded by the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America, had prevented the enhancement of social programmes for persons with disabilities in Cuba owing to a lack of sufficient resources. Nevertheless, the Government and people of Cuba were strongly committed to pursuing actions that would guarantee full respect for the dignity of persons with disabilities and the protection and promotion of all their rights.

3. **Ms. Nguyen** Phuong Nga (Viet Nam) said that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Convention converged in their ideas of equality and inclusivity, and the current discussion would help to reaffirm commitments, redouble efforts and reinforce actions to work towards truly leaving no one behind. In Viet Nam, equality and non-discrimination were guiding principles in the promotion and protection of the rights of all people. There were several programmes to support persons with disabilities as well as initiatives to promote their participation in social activities, such as centres promoting independence and providing knowledge and skills. The Government had established policies to encourage organizations and individuals to offer technical and financial support to persons with disabilities for education, vocational training, jobs creation and other services. In 2016, the first national survey on persons with disabilities had been conducted in Viet Nam and a set of indicators had been issued in 2017 to enable regular monitoring and reporting on the progress of implementing disability support policies.

4. **Ms. Tesoriero** (Observer for the New Zealand Human Rights Commission) said that various international reports had concluded that persons with disabilities generally suffered from poorer health, lower educational achievements, fewer economic opportunities and higher rates of poverty. The Convention therefore remained as relevant as it had been a decade previously, and no one should be left behind in its implementation. The independent monitoring mechanism in New Zealand was working with the Government to make progress in the following priority areas: education, housing, employment, data, access to information, and seclusion and restraint.

5. The Commission was undertaking significant research into the attitudes that New Zealanders held. It had been discovered that negative responses to persons with disability were often exacerbated by discriminatory attitudes towards such persons with other identities, such as indigenous persons or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. Furthermore, new risks were posed in the context of social media, which facilitated the bullying of persons with disabilities. It was a change in mindset, rather than a sense of moral obligation, that would allow persons with disabilities to be given key roles in policymaking, both in the public and private sectors. Hence the need to fully implement article 8 of the Convention, on awareness-raising.

6. **Ms. Alainchair** (Senegal) said that her Government had introduced various measures to implement the Convention. In particular, 50,000 equal opportunities cards had been issued between 2013 and 2017 in order to promote access to basic social services, including mutual health insurance programmes, family security grants and public transport services. Two important decisions had emerged from an interministerial meeting held on 13 February 2018, namely, to adopt implementing legislation by the end of the year for its Social Policy Act to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and to mobilize resources to fund the National Disability Action Plan 2017–2021. Furthermore, Senegal had been chosen as the pilot country responsible for the implementation of the second phase of the African Union Disability Architecture project, and had held a regional training workshop for high-level officials on disability inclusion, bringing together some 25 countries.

7. **Mr. Lootah** (United Arab Emirates) said that his country had made significant progress in promulgating its Federal Law No. 29 of 2006 on the Rights of Persons

with Disabilities, and had passed legislation on equal opportunities in education. The previous year, his Government had launched a national policy to empower persons with disabilities, offering a national road map for building an inclusive society. Several steps had been taken to improve the situation of women with disabilities, including action by the national bank to support commercial opportunities. To fulfil the commitments enshrined in the Convention it would be necessary to think in new ways and explore the use of technology to support global efforts. Technology service centres had therefore been set up to put students with disabilities in contact with technology, and a more accurate database had been established to provide high-quality services to persons with disabilities through the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority. His Government also hoped to enable persons with disabilities to access sports and tourism facilities. In that context the Middle East North Africa Special Olympics Regional Games, held in Abu Dhabi in March 2018, had been good preparation for the Special Olympics World Games to be held in 2019.

8. **Ms. Tupi** (Observer for the World Federation of the Deaf) welcomed the proclamation in General Assembly resolution 72/161 of 23 September as International Day of Sign Languages, which represented an important step towards global recognition and respect for sign languages. The first International Day of Sign Languages would be held under the cross-cutting theme "With Sign Language, Everyone is Included". Unless information was made available to deaf persons through sign languages, the goal of leaving no one behind would not be achieved. Instead of asking hearing persons to speak on behalf of deaf persons, consultations should be held with national associations of the deaf and with deaf leaders themselves. A small number of countries had made the Convention available in their national sign languages, and more should do the same. A visual toolkit providing guidance and connecting the deaf community to the Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals would be launched on the World Federation of the Deaf website later that week.

9. **Mr. Ionatamishvili** (Georgia) said that his Government was responsible for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring a decent life for all, and no time should be lost in resolving those challenges. Under previous administrations persons with disabilities had received no support in exercising their rights to independent living, education and employment. No efforts had been made to increase access or adopt new legislation, and decisions had been made without the participation of disabled persons. The situation had changed in 2012 when the newly elected Government had declared the rights of persons with disabilities as a priority, leading to the ratification of the Convention, legal reform, increased levels of access, inclusive education, a programme of rehabilitation for children with autism and the Georgian Paralympic Movement. The constitutional reform process had included a provision on the obligation to create equal conditions for persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, many challenges remained, including ongoing limitations to physical access and employment for disabled persons, obstacles to independent living, and a lack of promotion of inclusive education needs and development programmes. Such issues would be addressed through social reforms, strengthened social work, and the creation of legal guarantees and effective enforcement mechanisms.

10. **Mr. Hoshino** (Japan) said that, earlier that year, Japan had finalized its fourth five-year Basic Programme for Persons with Disabilities, which was the first programme to be realized since his country had ratified the Convention. To ensure consistency and respect for the principles of the Convention, persons with disabilities were engaged in the policymaking process and their decision-making power was respected. Taking effective measures through the "plan, do, check and act" cycle must be promoted to continue making progress on implementation. The current Basic Programme for Persons with Disabilities had established 112 benchmarks with concrete goals for evidence-based policymaking. Japan was working towards the elimination of barriers for persons with disabilities and would continue its efforts towards full implementation of the Convention.

11. **Ms. Ikupa Alex** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her country had ratified the Convention in 2009 and the following year had enacted the Persons with Disabilities Act, which focused on the promotion and protection of rights to health, accessibility, rehabilitation, education, employment and anti-discrimination measures. To ensure that no one was left behind, the Government was reviewing its policies on disability, employment and social security, providing technical and financial support to persons with disabilities and organizations of persons with disabilities, and had improved inclusive education and increased the provision of technical aid and assistive devices. In addition, national health exemption guidelines were being developed to facilitate access to health care for persons with disabilities, and it was mandatory for such persons to have at least 3 per cent representation in both public and private institutions; a national plan of action had been launched to end violence against women and children, including persons

with disabilities; vocational rehabilitation centres promoting self-reliance training had been established; and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism had visited Tanzania the previous year. Her Government was continuing to focus on collecting high-quality statistics and disaggregated data on disability, with a view to improving the data available on all disability groups. Her country required further support in moving towards a more inclusive society

12. **Mr. Yat Max** (Guatemala) said that Guatemala was a country living in a state of exclusion, having suffered recently from recurrent natural disasters and issues relating to industrial safety, violence and a lack of security. All such issues impacted persons with disabilities, who were themselves living in a state of exclusion on a daily basis. In the light of the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the initial report of Guatemala (CRPD/C/GTM/CO/1), his Government had been working on an implementation plan that would be followed up in various public institutions. While progress had been made on the recommendations contained in the report, the Government would need to increase efforts to ensure that policies benefited persons with disabilities. Improved working methods were also needed to ensure that plans and projects were developed in the future. The Guatemalan Secretariat for Planning and Programming of the Presidency had therefore been working with various planners in public institutions in that regard.

13. **Ms. Dassama** (Sierra Leone) said that the presidential elections held in Sierra Leone earlier that year had ensured inclusive and accessible voting for persons with disabilities thanks to support from the international community. Psychosocial challenges in her country had been compounded following the floods and mudslides in Freetown the previous year, which had left some survivors with mobility-related disabilities and mental health issues. In response, her Government had strengthened psychosocial and protection interventions at all levels to ensure effective and efficient delivery of services. The President of Sierra Leone had recently pledged to review and implement policies and laws relating to disability, improve incentives for teachers in special needs institutions, provide free health care for persons with disabilities, and offer livelihood support for their economic improvement. Such a commitment would further strengthen existing national policies, including the Persons with Disability Act of 2011. Sierra Leone had demonstrated a strong commitment to international human rights instruments and treaties, particularly the Convention. Achievements included the campaign to strengthen capacity for working with autistic children in schools and in their communities; the finalization of the draft policy on inclusive education; and an ongoing review of the Lunacy Act for its alignment with ongoing mental health trends. Unfortunately, the headquarters of the National Commission for Persons with Disability had suffered a fire earlier that year, with huge implications for coordination, programme development and implementation, and corresponding consequences for the lives of persons with disabilities.

14. **Mr. Lambertini** (Italy) said that there was still a long way to go in achieving the permanent closure of all psychiatric hospitals worldwide, and to empower persons with mental and intellectual disabilities to exercise their rights and be fully involved in society. All Member States should follow the example of Italy as the first country to have passed a law to mark the end of mental asylums. Italy would remain at the forefront of promoting the rights of persons with disabilities within the international sphere. The rights of such persons, particularly those of women and girls, were one of the priorities of Italy as a candidate to the Human Rights Council for the term 2019–2021, and were at the core of the government agency Italian Development Cooperation and its projects. Italy followed a twin-track approach of promoting initiatives specifically addressing persons with disabilities in several countries, and of including persons with disabilities in the definition of all projects. It was important to continue defining innovative policies, both at the bilateral and multilateral levels, in order to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. In doing so, a truly participatory approach must be adopted in which all relevant stakeholders, chiefly persons with disabilities themselves, were included.

15. **Mr. Bauwens** (Observer for the International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus) said that, with proper treatment and support, children with Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus could thrive and live in equality with others. Children with disabilities were more likely to be unregistered than their peers without disabilities, which was a violation of article 18, paragraph 2, of the Convention which stated that children with disabilities should be registered immediately after birth and should have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by their parents. The fundamental right to birth registration was also recognized under article 24, paragraph 2, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, under article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and under Sustainable Development Goal

target 16.9. Children with disabilities who were not registered at birth were at greater risk of neglect, institutionalization and even death. Acknowledging legal existence was vital for inclusion and access to such basic rights as health care. Every year, thousands of children with Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus did not appear in statistics, did not receive proper treatment and care, and died prematurely. He looked forward to reading the report on the rights of persons with disabilities to the highest attainable standard of health, to be presented by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. Registering children at birth was the first step in securing their recognition before the law, safeguarding their rights and ensuring that any violation of those rights was duly noted.

16. **Ms. Hendricks** (Jamaica) said that persons with disabilities were often left behind due to their vulnerability, and were negatively impacted by attitudes and environmental conditions. Their participation in society made a value contribution towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Such considerations had guided the policies and measures adopted by Jamaica through the Disabilities Act of 2014, which protected the rights of persons with disabilities and promoted their socioeconomic development. The national utilities regulator had developed a policy to increase social inclusion and enhance customer service for persons with disabilities. Her country was establishing a national identification system, which would help ensure that no one was left behind, assist with data collection and facilitate the allocation of benefits. Her Government had passed the Building Act of 2017 to improve accessibility to buildings, and had increased funds to provide support to students with disabilities. The Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities had launched a national awareness campaign to raise awareness of the Disabilities Act, educate persons with disabilities about their rights and encourage greater levels of inclusion. Jamaica was currently developing codes of practice to offer guidance on increasing the participation of persons with disabilities. Full and effective realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention required a comprehensive and integrated approach.

17. **Ms. Bogyay** (Hungary) said that her Government was committed to leaving no one behind through the full implementation of the Convention and believed that the political participation of persons with disabilities was key. Successful leadership from the disability community was embodied by Dr Ádám Kósa, the first Member of the European Parliament with a hearing impairment, and Dr László Lovászy, a member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The previous year, Hungary had hosted the third International Conference of the World Federation of the Deaf. In order to leave no one behind, Hungary had planned for a full transition from institutional care to community-based services by 2036, which would benefit 10,000 persons with disabilities and would include supported and independent housing, professional training for human rights-based services and detailed assessments to tailor care to the needs of individuals. There was strong institutional support for the implementation of the Convention, through the National Council of Associations of Persons with Disabilities, and a thematic working group for the rights of persons with disabilities. Recommendations by the latter were submitted to a national expert group on disability which prepared strategic proposals, and to an interministerial committee on disability, which coordinated legal proposals and initiatives related to disability.

18. **Ms. Krisnamurthi** (Indonesia) said that the vulnerability of persons with disabilities was exacerbated in situations of poverty and inequality, and where there was a lack of social protection, which prevented such persons from developing the skills that would lead towards the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda. Changing attitudes and removing barriers that hindered persons with disabilities was necessary. The latest population census in Indonesia had shown that the country had some 20 million persons with disabilities, and the Convention had provided the Government with a platform to promote their well-being. In 2016, Indonesia had enacted Law No. 8/2016 on Persons with Disabilities, which had shifted the national perspective towards a human rights-based approach, helping to ensure that national development programmes were inclusive and accessible. Her Government had also established a development plan in an effort to align the principles of inclusion and leaving no one behind. Indonesia had one of the highest rates of blindness in the world, and her Government understood the need to facilitate access to information and knowledge for persons with visual disabilities. It was therefore in the process of ratifying the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled.

19. **Mr. Jürgenson** (Estonia) said that the 2030 Agenda should be implemented within the framework of the Convention and should be disability-inclusive. Legislation reflecting the commitment of Estonia to the Convention included a regulation providing detailed requirements for buildings related to the needs of persons with disabilities; an amendment to the

Chancellor of Justice Act which would entrust the Chancellor of Justice with promoting, protecting and monitoring the implementation of the Convention; and a legislative act granting carers of persons with profound disabilities five additional days of care leave per year. The Ministry of Social Affairs had led a large-scale integrated campaign, created by persons with disabilities, to show the public their abilities in coping with everyday life. The well-being of persons with disabilities was the responsibility of all, and countries and organizations must implement integral approaches when developing policies. Leaving no one behind, including persons with disabilities, was an ethical imperative.

20. **Mr. Jia** Yong (China) said that, since ratifying the Convention, his Government had been actively fulfilling its obligations by submitting compliance reports for review by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. China had amended its law on the protection of persons with disabilities and its regulations for their education, and had promulgated its regulations on the construction of a barrier-free environment and on disability prevention. In 2015, China had established its goal of building a moderately prosperous society by 2020, leaving no persons with disabilities behind. Measures included the protection and improvement of the livelihoods of persons with disabilities, ensuring that they shared in social and economic development and prioritizing poverty reduction. China had established a dynamic database on the status and needs of persons with disabilities, which had informed national policymaking and enabled the creation of targeted services. Over 20 million persons with disabilities with financial difficulties or severe disabilities had benefited from subsidies from the State Council. His country had been working actively with the international community to incorporate disabilities into bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, including the holding of regular meetings with the United States of America on issues concerning persons with disabilities and the establishment of cooperation and exchange mechanisms with the Russian Federation and Australia. All States parties and all sectors of society must work towards achieving the goals related to persons with disabilities as part of the 2030 Agenda, and towards promoting the inclusive development of such persons.

21. **Mr. Suan** (Myanmar) said that since acceding to the Convention, Myanmar had been actively implementing steps towards its full realization. For example, a law to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities had been enacted in 2015, empowering such persons to take part in all spheres of social, economic, political and professional life. In addition, the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Myanmar Federation of Persons with Disabilities had been established, and a national social protection plan had been adopted to meet the socioeconomic needs of citizens, particularly children, women, older persons and persons with disabilities. His Government had also been working with several regional and international organizations to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

22. The need to incorporate disability into future development efforts was evident from the nexus between disability and poverty. In that context, a socioeconomic environment providing equal job opportunities for persons with disabilities must be created, to ensure that no one was left behind. To that end, meetings had been held with private sector stakeholders to offer pre-job training courses and livelihood, income-generation and social protection programmes to persons with disabilities. A variety of programmes had also been carried out to raise public awareness of the need for persons with disabilities to enjoy equal rights and freedom from discrimination, neglect and violence.

23. **Mr. Bainbridge** (Observer for the Christian Blind Mission) said that his organization focused on creating an inclusive world in which all persons with disabilities could enjoy their human rights and achieve their full potential. It was crucial for the Convention to guide the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals to ensure that no one was left behind. Furthermore, humanitarian aid and international cooperation must fully respect the rights of persons with disabilities and States not yet engaging in disability-inclusive humanitarian aid and international cooperation should start doing so. The meaningful and effective participation of persons with disabilities benefited society as a whole. To achieve such inclusion, collecting and enhancing data disaggregation was vital and the use of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability would ensure international comparability over time. Disability-responsive budgeting was key for the implementation of the Convention and the 2030 Agenda. A failure to adopt that approach would result in leaving persons with disabilities behind.

24. *The meeting was suspended at 11.20 a.m. and resumed at 11.30 a.m.*

(b) Round table discussions:

(i) National fiscal space, public-private partnerships and international cooperation for strengthening the implementation of the Convention

25. *Mr. Rohland (Germany), President, and Mr. Macanawai (civil society) presided as Co-Chairs.*

26. **Mr. Macanawai** (civil society), Co-Chair, said that the discussion would focus on the implementation of the human rights of persons with disabilities through inclusive development, exploring the national fiscal space, public-private partnerships and international cooperation to strengthen the Convention. Key areas included the implementation of the Convention at the national level, and persons with disabilities living in poverty in least developed and developing countries. The implementation of the Convention with a limited budget posed a real challenge.

27. **Ms. Cisternas Reyes** (Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility), panellist, said that, while national fiscal space remained an ambiguous concept, the International Monetary Fund had defined it as the ability of a Government to raise spending or lower taxes without endangering market access and debt sustainability.

28. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development provided a global framework for financing development, including a series of items closely linked to persons with disabilities, such as measures on social protection, accessible infrastructure and decent work. Such obligations fell primarily to government authorities, but other actors had a role to play, including micro, small, medium and large enterprises. Furthermore, as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda needed to be supported by relevant data and statistics, developing countries would need billions of dollars to compile their requisite annual statistics or censuses. Multilateral cooperation would be crucial in that regard.

29. The high-level political forum on sustainable development had highlighted the need for leadership on development from private enterprises. However, the latter must be persuaded to engage in development partnerships that, above all, shared risks and rewards fairly; avoided actions that ran counter to development, providing compensation where necessary; promoted the employment of persons with disabilities; respected the concept of corporate responsibility; and invested in sustainable development, particularly for persons with disabilities. Arguments must also be found to convince enterprises to follow the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. By showing their commitment to sustainable development and persons with disabilities, for instance by contributing to public policies on employment and accessibility, private enterprises would receive a return on their investment through the enhancement of their corporate image.

30. **Ms. Kitamura** (National Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Disabilities, Japan), panellist, said that all cooperation sectors had different strengths, limitations, opportunities and constraints, and knowledge-sharing could accelerate the process of achieving equality for persons with disabilities. Collection of data by private and international organizations could be used as the foundation for creating new governmental statistics. By using the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability, it would be possible to make international comparisons and address a wide range of targets. The Washington Group helped to adapt indicators to the situation of each country and provided training on designing statistics.

31. After the great east Japan earthquake in 2011, the national public broadcaster had collected data showing that the mortality rate of persons with disabilities was double the general mortality rate in the affected area, which demonstrated the need to support the evacuation of such persons in the event of large-scale disasters. That case offered a good example of cooperation between the public and private sectors, with data collection by the broadcasting company, response by local governments, publication of results by organizations of persons with disabilities and completion of the data collection by the Government. Discussion on which governmental statistics should be disaggregated depending on disability was necessary, and information collection could be integrated if common data collection tools were agreed upon between sectors.

32. The World Health Organization estimated that about 15 per cent of the world's population lived with some form of disability, but few countries could provide welfare services for all those citizens using public funds. Private organizations were therefore taking a leading role to address the gap, including through international cooperation. For example, organizations of persons with disabilities had opened a support centre for such persons after the great east Japan earthquake, funded by donations from private organizations and individuals, with 10 per cent of the funds coming from overseas. Her organization was currently investigating the possibility of transferring some of those pioneering practices to the provision of government services in the event of future disasters.

33. *A short video was shown on the work undertaken by the Dominican Republic to improve the lives of persons with disabilities.*

34. **Mr. Corporán** (National Council on Disability, Dominican Republic), panellist, said that the Convention had been ratified in all but two countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region, and that full ratification would strengthen cooperation partnerships with the private sector. Ensuring the sustainability of social progress was a significant challenge, and the Convention acted as a guiding light towards true social change, which all actions, plans and measures taken should reflect. It was strange that the business world had not yet picked up on the figures provided by the World Bank which depicted persons with disabilities and their families as consumers. Similarly, the political class was often wary of engaging with the issue of disability, considering such action an expense rather than an investment. Increased international cooperation and funding in key sectors would therefore have a beneficial impact on persons with disabilities, enabling them to fully enjoy all their rights. South-South cooperation was also highly important for the Dominican Republic, which was collaborating with several countries in the region and working to incorporate disability into the Central American Integration System.

35. **Mr. Cuk** (Global Action on Disability Network), panellist, said that, in order to leave no one behind and truly implement the Convention, more sustainable funding was needed from Member States and other stakeholders in disability-inclusive development. New stakeholders must also be motivated to start making commitments and contributions. It was necessary to work together to share expertise, coordinate actions and generally raise the profile of disability across a broad range of organizations contributing to disability-inclusive development. The implementation budgets for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), for example, were disproportionately higher than the corresponding budget for the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Similarly, there was stronger financial support for non-governmental organizations promoting the rights of women and children than for those that promoted the rights of persons with disabilities. While those Member States, foundations and international non-governmental organizations that were successfully investing in the rights of persons with disabilities should be duly recognized, the insufficient financial and operational commitments that had been made since the implementation of the Convention remained a cause for concern.

36. His organization worked to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities among its members and had therefore fully aligned its actions with article 32 of the Convention. It had also attracted organizations that made both financial and general investments in disability-inclusive development, including new donors seeking to learn more about disability-inclusive development as well as development banks such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. Members collaborated in thematic working groups to make progress in such areas as inclusive education, social protection and humanitarian action. They had already achieved some success in jointly advocating for the adoption of an inclusion marker by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Members had also been actively promoting data disaggregation and the establishment of a system-wide action plan, accountability framework and unit to address the inclusion of persons with disabilities within the United Nations system, among other efforts.

37. **Ms. Srour** (General Palestinian Union of Persons with Disability), panellist, said that many persons with disabilities all over the world were suffering from isolation, marginalization and exclusion and many countries had unmonitored institutions for persons with disabilities where violence and violations of human rights took place. It was important for the gravity of those issue to be reflected in strategies, policies and budget-planning and it was the responsibility of all to find ways to enable persons with disabilities to fully participate as strong, effective contributors in development processes. The discrepancy in the budget for the implementation of the Convention and the place of persons with disabilities within the United Nations system should both be addressed. One solution might be to establish United Nations offices worldwide to appropriate budgets, conduct consultations and promote the universal implementation of the Convention.

38. In the context of international cooperation, it was important to separate politics from human rights and to remember that persons with disabilities were the real experts. International cooperation was sometimes politicized and used to manipulate international law and national legislation. Instead, it should be an arena for advocacy, and for ending occupation and armed conflict.

39. Articles in laws relating to persons with disabilities and other relevant national laws should encourage financial contributions to the implementation of the Convention from the private sector. In addition, private sector products and environments should be made accessible by law. As disability issues were cross sectoral, all public, private and non-profit organizations were

responsible for the implementation of the Convention and the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. State party representatives, international agencies and persons with disabilities, despite their differences, must find better ways of working together, fostering inclusion and preventing exclusion.

40. **Ms. Mercado** (Denmark) said that the principle of treating everyone with respect and dignity was reflected in the political system, civil society organizations, companies and the welfare system in Denmark. Danish social legislation aimed to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and to improve their overall quality of life. Social services worked to improve the potential for development of every individual through personal care, practical assistance, technical aid and financial support. However, it was still necessary to create the best possible framework to help more persons with disabilities gain employment, and to provide municipalities with the tools needed to ensure that the system catered to everyone. Inspiration and guidance should be taken from non-governmental organizations in the field of disability and from international partners and colleagues.

41. **Ms. Manombe-Ncube** (Namibia) said that political participation was an inherent human right, and persons with disabilities could experience citizenship in its fullest sense through involvement in public affairs. Namibia had therefore developed voter education programmes and an electoral system for persons with disabilities. In the Namibian Parliament there was one other woman with disabilities and two with albinism, which should be recognized as a disability due to the stigmatization and discrimination experienced by persons with albinism.

42. **Mr. Fembek** (Observer for the Essl Foundation) said that his organization was currently focusing its activities on the Zero Project, which was dedicated to exploring and communicating innovations, practices and policies that supported the implementation of the Convention. Over the previous six years, 400 innovations had been selected from all over the world, most of which had been presented at the annual Zero Project Conference in Vienna. The cross-sectoral, global approach adopted had led to three main findings on how the creation of public-private partnerships and international cooperation could be facilitated. Firstly, credible, evidence-based innovations and case studies were one of the strongest drivers towards the implementation of the Convention. Secondly, cross-sectoral inclusive cooperation was necessary to bridge gaps across borders and sectors and create dialogue among all stakeholders, within a clearly defined framework that excluded any unachievable goals. Thirdly, more effective communication was needed with stakeholders supporting the implementation of the Convention.

43. **Ms. Skaug** (Norway) said that disability inclusion was a high priority for Norwegian human rights policy, and it was important to support efforts to develop indicators and statistical methodologies to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Better knowledge of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities would enable improved policies and targeted actions. Inclusive education was a particular priority. Norway had led the development of the Global Digital Library project, which made quality-assured learning resources available in several African and Asian languages, and planned to place considerable emphasis on using universally accessible formats to benefit users with disabilities. Improvement was still needed in the documentation of good practices involving international cooperation, partly due to the lack of reliable data on disability and the lack of tools and systems for effective, systematic results management. Norway had supported the efforts of the United Kingdom to strengthen the use of statistics, and had actively contributed to work on introducing a policy marker on disability in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development system. Norway had also encouraged the inclusion of a definition of disability when using the Development Assistance Committee disability policy marker, which, if used systematically, could make a significant difference in efforts to achieve disability-inclusive societies. Using measurement tools such as the disability policy marker and the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability could represent a milestone in working towards fulfilment of the Convention and the 2030 Agenda. The lack of data for planning and monitoring inclusion reliably was a key challenge, particularly as it had not been possible to make global or regional comparisons.

44. **Mr. Samaniego** (Paraguay) said that the National Disability Council in Paraguay had created a space not only for decision-making by persons with disabilities but also for collaborative work between civil society organizations and the State, leading to the establishment of a national plan for the rights of persons with disabilities. The empowerment of persons with disabilities was not only important in terms of participation, but also in decision-making, in keeping with the concept of "nothing about us without us". In Paraguay, labour laws on inclusion stipulated that at least 5per cent of staff in the civil service must be persons with disabilities. Progress was also being made on labour inclusion in the private sector, the aim being to demonstrate ability before disability. Paraguay was the first country with historic Jesuit ruins that had put in

place ramps to facilitate access for persons with disabilities.

45. **Mr. Hossain** (Observer for ADD International) said that his organization was working to implement the Convention and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in order to improve the lives of persons with disabilities. To that end, it worked with microfinance institutions to enable persons with disabilities to access credit to set up businesses and used bilateral arrangements to allocate resources for international cooperation. Given the challenges associated with securing sufficient resources, the focus should be on domestic financing, increasing overseas development assistance and welcoming new partners from the private sector. The political commitment of Governments to mobilize resources was also highly important.

46. **Ms. Al Fahim** (United Arab Emirates) said that financing was the key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and reaching those at risk of being left behind, including persons with disabilities. In her country, mainstreaming had become the single most important policy decision on financing. A national committee had been set up to move forward with an innovative action plan to translate the Goals into reality, requiring all government entities to be fully capable of serving persons with disabilities, to submit progress reports and to include such persons in policy consultations. Mainstreaming had increased private sector engagement, with governmental regulations creating a market that encouraged companies not only to participate, but also to compete and innovate. A system-wide United Nations marker for persons with disabilities would be revolutionary in terms of mainstreaming and financing. Such an approach would require the United Nations and its partners to disclose their budgets and what they were delivering for persons with disabilities, and to engage with such persons in the design, execution and monitoring of programmes. The marker would also drive data disaggregation, which was a critical tool. Mainstreaming was indispensable in changing the approach to financing, and the United Nations could lead the way.

47. **Mr. Sushkevych** (Ukraine) said that the Russian translation of "persons with disabilities" in official United Nations documents still used the offensive word "invalids". That discriminatory term had however been removed from all Ukrainian legislation and the same approach should be taken throughout the United Nations system.

48. As a result of the ongoing war in his country billions of dollars had been wasted on resisting foreign aggression and tens of thousands of persons with disabilities had been deprived of their most basic rights. The United Nations should step up its efforts to combat aggression and thereby protect the human rights of persons with disabilities.

49. **Mr. Loufty** (Observer for Disability Peoples' International) said that States must include persons with disabilities in their budgets, otherwise they would not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It was the responsibility of the international corporate community to abide by the principles of the Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Persons with disabilities should be perceived as key agents in the process of economic and social development. There was a crucial need to make sure that all products, public spending and investments were inclusive for persons with disabilities. Accessibility was a crucial principle of the Convention and all Member States must abide by their commitment to it.

50. **Mr. Cuk** (Global Action on Disability Network) said that financing for development, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the Convention must all be taken seriously. It was time to move forward and words must now be translated into action.

51. **Mr. Corporán** (National Council on Disability, Dominican Republic) said that aligning the Convention with the Goals and national planning systems would help to mainstream disability issues and promote investment. The Dominican Republic was already taking such an approach and had successfully created an inter-agency project involving governmental organizations and civil society. The project promoted the rights of persons with disabilities through inclusive education, independent living and decent work, and involved the participation of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office for Project Services and UNICEF.

52. **Ms. Kitamura** (National Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Disabilities, Japan), making reference to the strong welfare systems and high tax rates in Denmark and Norway, said that Japan was considering how taxes could be used to increase the budget for persons with disabilities. The Norwegian Global Digital Library project was very valuable, but there was a potential issue regarding copyright limits on the exchange of digital books. Cooperation from publishers was needed to produce lower cost digital versions of paper books, which would benefit persons with visual impairments.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.